

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 805
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USNATO
AMCONSUL NAPLES
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES

S E C R E T ROME 3423

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USDOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: IT, UR
SUBJECT: SOVIETS REQUEST SHIP REPAIR FACILITIES IN NAPLES

REF: ROME 3073

1. AS INDICATED REFTTEL, I CALLED ON DEFENSE MINISTER RUFFINI
FEBRUARY 22 TO LODGE OUR OPPOSITION TO THE POSSIBLE GRANTING
OF ANY PORT REPAIR FACILITIES AT NAPLES TO THE SOVIET
MERCHANT OR NAVAL FLEETS.

2. MINISTER RUFFINI SHOWED CONSIDERABLE SURPRISE AT MY
REPORT OF THE RECENT APPROACH BY SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO THE MFA,
OF WHICH HE HAD NOT BEEN MADE AWARE. HE INFORMED ME THAT THE
USSR HAD MADE AN EARLIER EFFORT (TWO OR THREE MONTHS AGO) TO
OBTAIN REPAIR FACILITIES IN TARANTO. THAT REQUEST APPARENTLY
INCLUDED THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SMALL SOVIET FACILITY TO BE
MANNED AT LEAST PARTIALLY BY SOVIET PERSONNEL. RUFFINI

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RECORDED HIS NEGATIVE VIEW AT THAT TIME AND THE REQUEST WAS
DENIED. HE ASSERTED THAT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE WOULD BE
UNEQUIVOCALLY OPPOSED TO GRANTING ANY SUCH FACILITIES IN
NAPLES FOR OBVIOUS REASONS OF ALLIED SECURITY. HE ASKED,
HOWEVER, WHETHER IF A REQUEST WERE MADE TO USE REPAIR
FACILITIES IN A NON-MILITARY ITALIAN PORT SUCH AS PALERMO
(HIS OWN CONSTITUTENCY), WE WOULD HAVE ANY OBJECTION. RUSSIAN

MERCHANT VESSELS NORMALLY MAKE CALLS AT ITALIAN PORTS ANYWAY, RUFFINI RECALLED, AND OFFERING REPAIR SERVICES WOULD NOT GREATLY ADD TO THE FACILITIES THEY ALREADY ENJOY IN TERMS OF BUNKERING AND CHANDLERING. I REMINDED HIM THAT SPAIN, A NON-NATO ALLY HAD RECENTLY REFUSED SUCH SERVICES TO THE USSR, AND THOUGHT IT WOULD NOT BE FAVORABLY VIEWED TO HAVE ITALY RESPONSIVE TO REQUESTS FOR FACILITIES FOR THE SOVIET MERCHANT FLEET WHICH OF COURSE PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PARA-MILITARY ROLE IN SOVIET CALCULATIONS.

3. IN AN ASIDE TO HIS CHEF DE CABINET, GENERAL CALAMANEI, RUFFINI MADE CLEAR HIS POSITION THAT IT WAS VITAL FOR ITALY, PARTICULARLY IN THIS MOMENT OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL CRISIS, "TO MAINTAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF THE U.S. AND NATO EVEN IN THE SMALLEST MATTERS." ITALY HE ASSERTED SHOULD DO ABSOLUTELY NOTHING THAT COULD BE INTERPRETED AS AN "ATTITUDE OF BENEVOLENCE TOWARD THE WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES."

4. AT MY REQUEST, RUFFINI AGREED TO ASCERTAIN WHAT KINDS OF SERVICES THE SOVIET REQUEST FOR NAPLES EN- TAILED AND WHAT KINDS OF SHIPS (MILITARY OR MERCHANT) WERE ENVISAGED FOR ACCESS TO NAPLES FACILITIES.

5. AS IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO REACH FORLANI BEFORE I LEAVE FOR THE UNITED STATES, I WILL BE LODGING OUR CONCERN ON THIS ISSUE WITH SECRETARY GENERAL
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MALFATTI WHEN I MEET WITH HIM FEBRUARY 24.GARDNER

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